

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 685

AN ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “American Fighter Aces
3 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 The Congress finds the following:

6 (1) An American Fighter Ace is a fighter pilot
7 who has served honorably in a United States mili-
8 tary service and who has destroyed 5 or more con-
9 firmed enemy aircraft in aerial combat during a war
10 or conflict in which American armed forces have
11 participated.

12 (2) Beginning with World War I, and the first
13 use of airplanes in warfare, military services have
14 maintained official records of individual aerial vic-
15 tory credits during every major conflict. Of more
16 than 60,000 United States military fighter pilots
17 that have taken to the air, less than 1,500 have be-
18 come Fighter Aces.

19 (3) Americans became Fighter Aces in the
20 Spanish Civil War, Sino-Japanese War, Russian
21 Civil War, Arab-Israeli War, and others. Addition-
22 ally, American military groups’ recruited United
23 States military pilots to form the American Volun-
24 teer Group, Eagle Squadron, and others that pro-
25 duced American-born Fighter Aces fighting against
26 axis powers prior to Pearl Harbor.

1 (4) The concept of a Fighter Ace is that they
2 fought for freedom and democracy across the globe,
3 flying in the face of the enemy to defend freedom
4 throughout the history of aerial combat. American-
5 born citizens became Fighter Aces flying under the
6 flag of United States allied countries and became
7 some of the highest scoring Fighter Aces of their re-
8 spective wars.

9 (5) American Fighter Aces hail from every
10 State in the Union, representing numerous ethnic,
11 religious, and cultural backgrounds.

12 (6) Fighter Aces possess unique skills that have
13 made them successful in aerial combat. These in-
14 clude courage, judgment, keen marksmanship, con-
15 centration, drive, persistence, and split-second think-
16 ing that makes an Ace a war fighter with unique
17 and valuable flight driven skills.

18 (7) The Aces' training, bravery, skills, sacrifice,
19 attention to duty, and innovative spirit illustrate the
20 most celebrated traits of the United States military,
21 including service to country and the protection of
22 freedom and democracy.

23 (8) American Fighter Aces have led distin-
24 guished careers in the military, education, private
25 enterprise, and politics. Many have held the rank of

1 General or Admiral and played leadership roles in
2 multiple war efforts from WWI to Vietnam through
3 many decades. In some cases they became the high-
4 est ranking officers for following wars.

5 (9) The extraordinary heroism of the American
6 Fighter Ace boosted American morale at home and
7 encouraged many men and women to enlist to fight
8 for America and democracy across the globe.

9 (10) Fighter Aces were among America's most-
10 prized military fighters during wars. When they ro-
11 tated back to the United States after combat tours,
12 they trained cadets in fighter pilot tactics that they
13 had learned over enemy skies. The teaching of com-
14 bat dogfighting to young aviators strengthened our
15 fighter pilots to become more successful in the skies.
16 The net effect of this was to shorten wars and save
17 the lives of young Americans.

18 (11) Following military service, many Fighter
19 Aces became test pilots due to their superior flying
20 skills and quick thinking abilities.

21 (12) Richard Bong was America's top Ace of all
22 wars scoring a confirmed 40 enemy victories in
23 WWII. He was from Poplar, Wisconsin, and flew the
24 P-38 Lightning in all his combat sorties flying for
25 the 49th Fighter Group. He was killed in 1945 dur-

1 ing a P-80 test flight in which the engine flamed
2 out on takeoff.

3 (13) The American Fighter Aces are one of the
4 most decorated military groups in American history.
5 Twenty-two Fighter Aces have achieved the rank of
6 Admiral in the Navy. Seventy-nine Fighter Aces
7 have achieved the rank of General in the Army, Ma-
8 rines, and Air Force. Nineteen Medals of Honor
9 have been awarded to individual Fighter Aces.

10 (14) The American Fighter Aces Association
11 has existed for over 50 years as the primary organi-
12 zation with which the Aces have preserved their his-
13 tory and told their stories to the American public.
14 The Association established and maintains the Out-
15 standing Cadet in Airmanship Award presented an-
16 nually at the United States Air Force Academy; es-
17 tablished and maintains an awards program for out-
18 standing fighter pilot “lead-in” trainee graduates
19 from the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps; and
20 sponsors a scholarship program for descendants of
21 American Fighter Aces.

22 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

23 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
24 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
25 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements

1 for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a single
2 gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the American
3 Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic
4 military service and defense of our country's freedom,
5 which has spanned the history of aviation warfare.

6 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
7 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
8 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-
9 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
10 Secretary.

11 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
13 gold medal in honor of the American Fighter Aces,
14 the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian In-
15 stitution, where it will be available for display as ap-
16 propriate and available for research.

17 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense
18 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
19 should make the gold medal awarded pursuant to
20 this Act available for display elsewhere, particularly
21 at appropriate locations associated with the Amer-
22 ican Fighter Aces, and that preference should be
23 given to locations affiliated with the Smithsonian In-
24 stitution.

1 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

2 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
3 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
4 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
5 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
6 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
7 and the cost of the gold medal.

8 **SEC. 5. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

9 The medal struck pursuant to this Act is a national
10 medal for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
11 Code.

Passed the House of Representatives May 19, 2014.

Attest:

Clerk.

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